

School-to-Nature



Adult Chipmunk



Baby Chipmunk

Chipmunk

Chipmunks are the smallest members of the squirrel family. Their species name is *Tamias*, which translates as someone who takes care of food supplies. They are native to all of North America. There are 25 species of Chipmunks in the world, and 24 live in the U.S. They live for about three years, weigh 1.1 to 1.8 ounces, and are 7.2 to 8.5 inches long.

Chipmunks are ground-dwellers, digging extensive tunnel systems, dens, and nests, choosing to live in forest areas or heavy brush, but sometimes under human dwellings. A Chipmunk's tunnel entranceway can be 20 feet long. Each chipmunk has its own tunnel system, preferring to live alone.

They are omnivores, eating mostly grains, nuts, seeds, fruit, berries, worms, insects, and frog and bird eggs. They love bird-feeding seeds. A Chipmunk will fill its cheek pouches and bring the food back to its nest for storage. It can store 165 acorns in a day. They are hunted by hawks and other hunting birds, foxes, coyotes, weasels and snakes, and also by domestic and feral cats. When danger comes, they can be heard making a chirping sound to warn of danger. This chirp is also used as a mating call by the females. Interesting fact: they are excellent tree climbers and swimmers.

Mother Chipmunks give birth in spring and again in late summer. The typical litter of 4-5 babies stay in the nest about six weeks. Chipmunks hibernate in their dens over winter, eating the food they have stored; they usually store much more food for winter than they need- they really do take care of food supplies, just as their name *Tamias* suggests.

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